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NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

Über die Stellung der Gegenstandstheorie im System der Wissenschaften.

Von A. MEINONG. Leipzig, R. Voigtländers Verlag, 1907. — pp. vi, 159.

This book is made up of a series of articles which have appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*. It constitutes a defense of Meinong's views and a further explanation of his new science, 'Gegenstandstheorie.' Such an explanation was needed, for with some discriminating criticism has been combined a considerable amount of misunderstanding, and this despite the fact that, whatever we may say of the validity of his views, his main contentions are clear and demand consideration.

It was to be expected that his claim for the existence of a class of objects which, because of our "prejudice in favor of the real" (all existing sciences, with the exception of parts of mathematics, being concerned with the real), are "homeless," and should therefore have a science of their own, would meet with little sympathy, especially when this science, according to specifications, includes the unreal and the impossible. At this time, when Science is having all she can do to take care of her multitudinous children, and when Philosophy, in some of her main tendencies at least, is counselling a somewhat drastic treatment of this overplus as useless and illegitimate, it is not surprising that such a claim should raise the cry of 'useless knowledge'! That, for instance, — to take the illustration which Meinong is continually using, — he should insist that there is a distinction, on the one hand, between colors *as objects* and color *presentations*, which are mental facts, and, on the other hand, between these objects and the physical equivalents of colors, which are material facts, is, in itself, not remarkable. But to insist further that the propositions about colors, as objects, belong to a third science different from either of the 'real' sciences, psychology or physics, must seem, and has seemed to many, a useless development of distinctions. To this cry of 'useless knowledge,' however, Meinong has replied in the spirit, and with the weapons, characteristic of the best (or worst, according to the point of view) in German scholarship. His comprehensive view of the methods of the sciences, which has enabled him to show that, apart from any question of the abstract and ideal demands of science, of knowledge for its own sake, it is precisely these propositions about non-existent and impossible objects which have many times in the history of science been most important in determining the truth about the real, is in striking contrast to other hasty and over-confident judgments as to what is, and what is not, 'useless knowledge.'

The second phase of his main contention, that the knowledge of these objects is of a 'peculiar' kind, is *a priori*, has met with scarcely more sympathy. There are many who will agree, and indeed have agreed, with him that, if by *a priori* is meant independent of experience in the narrower sense of perception, — and he assures us that the term is used merely in the negative sense of knowledge free from experience as far as the judgment is concerned, and that he does not mean that the constituents of the proposition are necessarily known independently of perceptual experience, — then many of the judgments of relation among ideas, as for instance in mathematics, are non-experiential and *a priori*. The formidable array of reasonings with which he supports this thesis in the present work should, it would seem, if such argument were still necessary, convince us that the establishment of the validity of propositions in geometry does not depend upon the *perception* of the relations established. It is, as Meinong has shown, irrelevant to observe that the equality of the angles of an equilateral triangle would not have occurred to any one without inspecting the figure itself. The important thing is that the equality is proved, and can only be proved by *a priori* reasoning.

But the real difficulty arises in connection with his conception of the *relation* of these two forms of knowledge to *reality*, as it finds expression in the proposition, "Daseinswissen ist von Natur empirisch, daseinsfreies Wissen von Natur apriorisch," and its converse, which he also accepts, that all empirical knowledge is knowledge of existents, while all *a priori* knowledge has non-existents as its objects. For it is, in the first place, doubtful whether the difference between empirical and *a priori* can be reduced to one of *form* of proposition. Existential judgments, as for instance those which are the products of inference, frequently contain *a priori* as well as empirical elements, while judgments which apparently have to do merely with the consistency of propositions, with relations, presuppose some reference to reality, immediate or remote.

Meinong, to be sure, denies that reality is implicated in judgments other than existential, and his discussion at this point is among the most interesting in the book, although to the present writer not convincing. The judgments of non-existence of impossible objects, such as ghosts, Pallas Athena, phlogiston, are for him *a priori*, and arise out of insight into impossibility. Thus the proposition, "ghosts do not exist," is not to be interpreted as having reality as its subject and "no ghosts" as predicate. The ideal construct 'ghosts' is the subject and non-existence the predicate, the judgment being directed upon something which is not within the sphere of reality at all. The fact that the thought that the object 'ghost' is non-existent, and the judgment, "such and such a bit of undetermined reality (a shadow, or what not) is not a ghost," are for practical purposes identical, should not blind us to the essential difference in the nature of the two judgments. Similarly, the attempt to reduce the categorical propositions of mathematics, *e. g.*, geometry, to hypotheticals is, to his mind, no less mis-

leading ; it leads in fact, to the sophistry which would logically find expression in the proposition that, "if an equilateral triangle does not exist, it is then not equiangular," when, as a matter of fact, the question of existence is not involved. His proposition that all attempts to reduce *Sosein* to *Dasein* leads to scepticism we can grant, however, only on the assumption that reality is to be limited to perception, an assumption which is, to say the least, doubtful.

No less difficult is it to follow Meinong in the second consequence of his divorce of the 'what' from the 'that.' Corresponding to the denial that reality is in any way logically implicated in propositions which deal with the 'what' (the *Sosein*), it is necessary, in his view, to insist equally upon the irrelevance of the psychological presuppositions of these objects and their meanings. In his war against all *Psychologismus* in the theory of knowledge, he goes so far as to deny that the fact that the ideal objects are predetermined by experience relates them in any way to reality. The ideal objects of geometry, the impossible objects of thought (ghosts, phlogiston, etc.) have, he admits, a pseudo-existence ; they exist in the mind, are predetermined by certain past experiences ; but this inherence in experience, this existence in mind, is irrelevant for the knowledge of their intrinsic nature, and has nothing to do with real existence. It is here that many of Meinong's readers, though compelled to acknowledge that precisely in this extreme *Zuspitzung* of the problem he has done good service, will find it necessary to part company with him. That there are some objects of knowledge which are 'daseinsfrei,' in the sense that judgments about their 'Sosein' may be passed without explicit reference to reality, is undoubtedly true ; but reality is implied as a more ultimate objective intent, and is presupposed in this inherence in psychical content. Should not the very fact, that the exigences of the situation required the formation of the concept of 'pseudo-existence,' have aroused doubt of the reality of the situation itself?

Meinong admits that his insight into the relation of the 'what' to the 'that' leaves much to be desired, and it is to be feared that it will continue to remain imperfect so long as he works with his present concepts of experience and reality. What is the ultimate nature of our ascription of reality to a content ? This is, of course, the point upon which the whole right or wrong of Meinong's contention must turn, and into the discussion of that problem we have no intention of entering here. Grant Meinong his primary assumption, the 'absolute' theory, that the ascription of reality is a fundamental unanalysable act of consciousness, the perceptual judgment, and there are, without question, many objects of thought, with their own meanings and values, which are 'daseinsfrei.' To so describe them, and to seek to do them justice, would be merely a recognition of facts, and would merit the characterization of 'radical empiricism,'—a term which the present writer applied to the standpoint in *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, and one of which, as Meinong says, "it

may well be proud." But can we grant this assumption, and with it the restriction of experience to perception? Apparently not, unless we ignore the great variety of ways in which we ascribe reality to a content. But if there is no single fundamental act which assigns reality to the mere 'that,' apart from all relations, then the process of experiencing reality must consist in a relation of the content in question to other contents. On this 'relative' theory, the distinction between empirical and *a priori* could not be ultimate, for all forms of discovery and realization must fall within experience, in the wider sense of the term. A 'genetic logic' would, of course, be abhorrent to Meinong; but it is difficult to see how, without such a point of view, he is ever to get the *dissecta membra* of knowledge together again.

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Hauptprobleme der Religionsphilosophie der Gegenwart. Von RUDOLF EUCKEN. Berlin, Reuther & Reichard, 1907. — pp. 120.

This attractive book consists of three lectures, "Die seelische Begründung der Religion," "Religion und Geschichte," and "Das Wesen des Christentums," which were delivered at a theological *Ferienkurs* in Jena in October, 1906, and give in popular form the application of Eucken's activist Idealism to those highest and ultimate problems of life and of philosophy, the problems of religion.

The opening lecture deals with the basis of religion in the soul. The author first sets aside two false accounts: the intellectualistic, which bases religion upon an insight into the excellence of the structure and constitution of the world; and that which makes religion merely subjective, a mere form or product of human feeling. Over against these, — which are not adequate to the nature of religion as it actually is, an experience in which "something more than human works in man and lifts him above himself, makes a new being of him and opens up to him a new relation to other men," — Eucken sets his own principle of the "Selbstständigkeit des Geisteslebens." This is the central principle of Eucken's philosophy, and it is also the central difficulty of the student of that philosophy. Does it mean simply the *independence* of spiritual life? If so, the question at once arises, Independent of what? and the philosophy falls to pieces as a dualism. But if it means the *self-dependence* (*i. e.*, absoluteness) of spiritual life, we have a profound and self-consistent philosophy which must be ranked as a form of Absolute Idealism; a philosophy which holds that spiritual life is not only the primary, but the sole and all-inclusive, reality of the universe.

As between these two interpretations, Eucken's phraseology, — especially his frequent application of the terms "überlegen" and "Überlegenheit" to spiritual life, — might incline us to the former; but the latter is surely the true one. In the first place, it is the only one that does any sort of justice to those ethical and religious interests which Eucken has most at